



Commonwealth of Kentucky
Office of the Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Governor Beshear Kicks off the
Commonwealth's Journey to Wellness Program**

Kentucky is first state to launch Virgin HealthMiles program to employees

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 2, 2008) – Governor Steve Beshear and Personnel Cabinet Sec. Nikki Jackson today announced that Kentucky is the first state in the nation to offer the Virgin HealthMiles program to its employees and other members of the Kentucky Employees Health Plan (KEHP) as part of the administration's *Journey to Wellness* program.

"Today we are launching a wellness program that encourages employees to take an active role in their own health by competing to lower Kentucky's high national adult obesity and chronic disease rates," said Gov. Beshear. "A healthy workforce is not only a matter of quality of life for our teachers, state employees, and retirees; it is critical to government productivity."

Christopher Boyce, CEO of Virgin HealthMiles, attended today's kick-off to show support for the commonwealth's implementation of the award-winning Virgin HealthMiles program. The announcement was held during the first of 18 benefit fairs conducted during health insurance open enrollment and featured a Virgin HealthMiles walk around the Frankfort Convention Center grounds, aimed to highlight the importance of preventive health care and the launch of new wellness initiatives for state employees.

"We are proud to partner with the commonwealth of Kentucky as they are the first state government in the nation to provide the HealthMiles program to all employees and plan members," said Boyce. "It is truly an honor for Virgin HealthMiles and the Virgin Group to be working with innovative leaders, such as the good people of Kentucky, who have recognized how wellness programs can benefit their employees and, in turn, the citizens of the commonwealth."

Beginning in 2009, KEHP members will be able to sign up to participate in the Virgin HealthMiles program. Employee participants will be provided a *GoZone*, a pedometer that will allow them to track their daily steps and other physical activity upload their data

to their own personal *LifeZone* tracking program. To encourage employee participation, the program provides a variety of challenges and monthly sweepstakes for cash prizes, as well as opportunities to redeem cash they've earned and won on their personal *LifeZone* Web site. A participant's chance of winning the monthly sweepstakes is enhanced the more actively they participate in the program.

The Personnel Cabinet began the pilot *Journey to Wellness* program that will support state employees with weight management programs, health coaching, tobacco cessation, a *Know Your Numbers* campaign, walking clubs, a statewide weight loss competition, and preventive care programs, in addition to the new Virgin HealthMiles program.

"The results of our pilot program have been outstanding with more than 70 percent of Personnel employees participating in the *Journey to Wellness*," said Sec. Jackson. "Since the weight loss challenge began in August, the Cabinet has lost more than 300 pounds and we are looking forward to sharing the governor's program with all state employees."

Gov. Beshear and Sec. Jackson were also joined today by Jeff Bringardner, president of Humana's Kentucky commercial market operations. The commonwealth has worked with Humana, the state's health plan provider, to research best practices and offer a wellness program where all employees are encouraged to become engaged through incentive programs and to offer a variety of programs for the state workforce.

"The best way for the commonwealth to save money on health-related expenses is to help state employees get healthier," Bringardner said. "And one of the best ways to get healthier is to get serious about getting more physically active. With the HealthMiles program, we've seen many people who weren't previously exercising all of a sudden take a much greater interest in their fitness and health."

For more information about the Commonwealth's *Journey to Wellness*, visit <http://www.personnel.ky.gov/>. To get to know your numbers, take the Humana Health Assessment at <http://personnel.ky.gov/dei/wellness/healthassessment/>. Check out Kentucky's accomplishment as being the first state government to fully adopt the Virgin HealthMiles program at <https://www.virginhealthmiles.com/>.

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